**Carers Panel meeting notes 11.1.23**

**Attendees**: J. Aston, A. Bissett, T. Flockhart, D. Binnie, J. Innes-Campbell

**Apologies:** M. Scrimgeour, H. Wedgwood, M. Baxter, H. Doig, L. Sandie

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| **Organisational update** | *Gemma to provide an update from CoEL Senior staff to panel members.* |
| **Update from Jess Wade**Thanks very much for asking me for a regular update to the Panel, which I am delighted to have the opportunity to do. I know you will all have different experience of working with Carers of East Lothian, so I hope this is a relevant update and doesn't go over too much old ground. * You may be aware that the organisation has grown in size lately; we have benefited from increased funding to support carers locally, through the Carers Act, as well as increased funding coming from the Scottish Government, via Shared Care Scotland, to support Breaks from Caring. We have also seen donations from grants, individuals and community groups increase over the last year or so, and this is an area we would like to develop further.
* We received some funding specifically to revamp our office and make it more carer-friendly / trauma informed. This is work we will focus on this Spring as we hope to create an environment where carers feel comfortable both dropping in and using the space as well as retaining space for colleagues to work from the office.
* We have an ongoing focus on developing Volunteering within the organisation, with the creation of our Volunteer Coordinator role, and hope to develop the Befriending project as well as other volunteer opportunities.
* We have re-designed our approach to Breaks from Caring, launching the Time for Me Fund in the Autumn, which takes a more personalised approach to support carers to access a break, reducing bureaucracy both for carers and Carers of East Lothian in the process.
* We are working to set up a forum for carers of adults with complex needs to provide better support and also raise the voice of these carers, particularly as part of the Council's transformation programme
* We are working with the Council to support development of their new Carers Strategy and to ensure carers are also part of that work
* We are working on improving our website with some additional funding we accessed last year, including creating an online forum if possible, following feedback from carers
* In the coming year we hope to be able to bring in a Communications & Engagement role to strengthen our work in these areas
* We are keen to recruit new Board members and if anyone would like to know more about what this involved, please do get in touch with me.

Gemma asked panel for input on what information they would like to receive from Jess/ the organisation on a regular basis. Panel agreed consensus request: * An update on national developments relating to unpaid carers
* An update on any local developments relating to unpaid carers
* What are CoEL achievements since the last report?
* What is CoEL's plan moving forwards?

GTD to follow up on this request. **Update from Maria Burton – Draft Carers’ Strategy*** The Carers’ Panel comments have been included in the engagement feedback and in terms of ‘what we will do’ sections relating to each outcome in the strategy.
* Maria is meeting with David to get some feedback on the draft and will share it with GTD who can bring it to the group and give some feedback more generally?
* Maria will do some engagement on the draft at the hospital and in libraries etc over next month or 2 and publish in Apr so gives time to incorporate the panels feedback too.

**Think Carer training**CoEL are contracted to deliver 10 sessions to East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership each year to raise awareness of Carers’ rights, the challenges that carers face and the benefits of involving carers as collaborators in care.We have been working with Catherine Brockway, Site and Capacity Manager, Discharge Hub to organise 4 upcoming Think Carer sessions. Catherine has asked the ward charge nurses to try and identify staff to attend each date from their teams and an invitation has gone out to the therapists. **Befriending programme**I’ve highlighted information in yellow that due to time restrictions were not discussed in the meeting. Our befriending programme has reached a new stage of development. The training has now been developed and six volunteers have been through the training to become befrienders. They will move on to offer telephone befriending to carers from February. **Upcoming events programme:** ***Jan -*** *Afternoon tea, playlist for life****Feb*** *– Dementia Education workshop* *Mixed media arts session @ Made- Haddington*  *Historic Environment Scotland talk****March*** *– Amisfield Walled Gardens celebration of Spring*  *4 week mindfulness cours* ***April*** *- Rangers guided walk* ***May*** *– Floristry Session run by former carer* ***June*** *– Carers Week provision activities for carers – Dunbar craft session, massages for carers, Qi Gong for carers, Wee Red Upcycles* |
| **Draft terms of reference** | *Panel to provide any feedback on draft terms of reference.*Panel approved T.O.R and no amendments were suggested. Please remember you can claim expenses related to your panel membership that have been agreed by Panel Facilitator. |
| **Carers Union** | *Gemma to share contact details and discuss how panel members would like to proceed.*It was agreed that Gemma and David would make contact with Emma Pauley to establish what sort of work the Fife group are undertaking and establish what is working well. If G and D feel that it would be of benefit for the panel to meet with EP, they will invite her into meet with wider panel members. GTD to liaise with DB |
| **Follow up from In Control Scotland output** | *Discussion around how panel members would like to proceed with In Control Scotland campaign.*GTD to circulate question to all panel members to ask how and whether people would like to proceed with the campaign plan. |
| **Hot topics**  | *Gemma to share any 'hot topics' that have been raised by staff, including recurring conversations that Carer Support Workers are having with carers, to help panel members to widen their understanding of the issues that carers in East Lothian are currently facing.* |
| **Compassion in care –** New panel member TF shared his experience of care for his wife. TF explained that he observes a lack of compassion within professional care and that the quality of care is lacking. Panel member JIC shared her own personal experience of care, having been an unpaid carer, but also working in health services. JIC explained that she feels quality of training is lacking as well as compassion in care services. JIC reflected that she is ‘burnt out’ and that more staff are needed to lighten the load for health professionals. JA raised that an ageing population has led to an increase in demand on health services that is unsustainable.Discussion around what can be done?* We (CoEL) will continue to identify opportunities for Carers Panel to share these views and are open to any suggestions from the panel about new ways of having voices heard
* GTD introduced idea of panel collaborating with CoEL staff in redevelopment of Think Carer training *SEE SECTION ON THINK CARER*
* AB shared that her engagement with the strategy process has been positive and that she feels as though those involved with ELC are genuinely listening to carers perspectives, but acknowledged that however strong the strategy is, the ongoing issue of shortage of care staff needs to be addressed

Due to time constraints, the following ‘hot topic’ was not shared within the meeting. I am including for your information and comments are very welcome:**Continence pads -** A Carer Support Worker shared the following: *An issue I have become aware of recently is access to continence pads and other products on prescription. Carers are being given conflicting information by GPs, district nurses and the NHS Lothian Bowel and Bladder team. Some GPs and district nurses appear to be giving patients the Bowel and Bladder team number to contact them directly (all calls go to an answerphone so patients have to leave a message to receive a call back). But the Bowel and Bladder team stopped accepting self-referrals in May 2022. They insist a patient has to have a referral from either a GP or a district nurse to access the service. Meanwhile, carers are being passed from pillar to post and are struggling to buy appropriate products privately, especially if they are not online and/or are struggling to afford basics.**I was on a Carers Scotland call RE: pharmacy services this morning. Another participant pointed out that many female MSPs, including Monica Lennon, have campaigned extensively on period poverty. But continence pad poverty is likely to be a significant issue for carers/the people they care for too, particularly with the cost of living crisis.* |
| **Proposed agenda – standing items**  | *Panel to propose any additions to agenda standing items*Panel are keen (as per suggesting from DB) to draw up a programme of ‘influencers’ that they can meet with who can make a difference to the state of the situation for unpaid carers. Suggestions were raised: * MSP’s
* MP
* Elected members
* GP Lead
* IJB Chair

DB raised that panel need to be disciplined when meeting with ‘influencers’ and give them the opportunity to talk, to ensure the focus remains on ‘influencer’ actions.  |
| **Think Carer Training** | *Gemma to propose Panel involvement in Think Carer training development* Panel were keen to be involved. All members received this idea positively. GTD to start to make a plan about how panel members can be involved that is sensitive to time commitments.GTD to share the current Think Carer training with panel members. |
| **Carers’ Week 2023** | Discussion around panel involvement in planning for Carers’ Week 2023Discussion was not at length. Panel to think about what could be done in Carers week. GTD to add this topic to the agenda for the next panel meeting. |
| **A.O.B.** | GTD – Libraries* Catherine Findlay, well-being Officer with East Lothian Council Library Service.
* Funding in place to build a Carers Collection. The money must be spent by end March 2023 and will cover staff time for key wording and new stock.
* Catherine asked if we had a forum or group that could be consulted about this project to assist with identifying books/ digital content (for CR’s that may not be able to physically access library).
* Catherine’s post is funded for one year from the Scottish Government Covid response Fund.
* The main aim of the post is to create Health and Wellbeing Hubs in East Lothian libraries.
* Click & Collect facility which is open to all and Home Library Service which is open to housebound customers but could potentially be opened out to include carers who are unable to leave the person they care for alone so cannot visit libraries.
* Also discussed the possibility of Think Carer training for library staff.
* Ideally, COEL would like to see a Carer Champion in each library; this person would be ‘Think Carer’ trained and have a good understanding of issues facing carers locally plus know where to signpost them for support.
* Catherine will be writing social media including blog posts and could potentially include info here about COEL’s services.
* COEL “roadshows” at one library per day Mon – Fri during Carers Week. This could be used as an opportunity to promote the new Carers Collection and also raise awareness of COEL’s work.

Catherine will visit panel on 8.2.23.**Future panel meeting scheduling**General consensus from the panel is that a regular date for panel meetings would be beneficial for members. This would also lend itself well to a programme of guests. A Wed afternoon every 4-6 weeks was floated.GTD to send proposal of dates moving forwards. Wed pm 1:30 – 3:00 will be time of meeting. Parent carer members have been consulted to check this time is suitable around school collections. 2 PC members confirmed this time is suitable.

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| **Date** | **Time** | **Location** |
| Wed Feb 8th | 10:30 – 12:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed March 22nd | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed April 26th | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed May 31st | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed July 12th | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed August 23rd | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed September 27th | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed November 8th  | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |
| Wed December 13th | 13:30 – 15:00 | TBC with capacity to join online |

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